

Remote Sensing of Environment

An Interdisciplinary Journal

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Data: Mirrors of Science

By R. HOUWINK, Wassenaar, The Netherlands
1970, 222 pp., illus. [ISBN 0-444-00068-2], \$9.50.

Contents: Data and Images. Mathematics and Fundamental Physics. The Building Blocks: Atoms and Molecules. Space. Our Planet. The Source of Everything: Energy. Perception. The Biological World. Man and Science. Technical Flashes. The Hydroworld. Military. Sport and Games. Surprises for the Great. Bibliography. Units. Index.

"This book is a companion to an earlier one by the same author and publisher entitled *The Odd Book of Data*. The pair are a treasure trove of interesting facts concerning the entire field of science—broadly interpreted. The intent is to put these data into a more common context through the use of aptly chosen analogies and comparisons.

"As the author notes in his preface: 'If we learn that the daily intake of energy for an average man, 2,000 kilo-calories, is just equivalent to that of a 100-watt electric bulb shining through a day as well as a night we can forget how much energy they each consume. It is the comparison that is significant.'

"The books are filled with fascinating tangential pieces of information: for example, the number of years that have elapsed since the earth solidified is equal to the number of people on earth, which is equal to the number of cells in a man's brain, which is equal to the number of heartbeats in a man's life. The strength of intranuclear forces is made much more graphically evident to the general reader by the comment that, if a bag, say, two meters in diameter were formed from a sheet of nuclear matter only 1,000 billionth of a centimeter thick, a hydrogen bomb could be detonated within the bag without bursting it.

"Houwink has managed to evolve examples that stick in the memory with the tenacity of sheep burrs. These books of his are ideally suited to browsing, and if made required reading for anyone presenting any of the sciences to students at any level they could have a revolutionary effect on all contemporary classroom exercises."

D. ALLAN BROMLEY in *American Scientist*

The Odd Book of Data

By R. HOUWINK
1965 (reprinted 1966), 115 pp., illus., \$5.00, Dfl. 12.50

Contents. Introduction. Acknowledgments. The Universe. The Earth. Physics. Atoms and Molecules. Botany. Biology. Mankind. Sense organs. Energy. Some technical facts. Science and education. Economy. Transport and Communication. Oddly enough. References. Basic Numerical Data.

This intriguing and often amusing volume attempts to put science in perspective. Although Man claims to be Nature's most accomplished observer he nevertheless falls sadly short in one important respect—he cannot fully appreciate the enormity of his own discoveries. To grasp the scale of the natural phenomena his studies reveal he must evolve some form of expression which relates the intangible to familiar every day objects. To this end, and by precise yet frequently surprising examples the author reduces the most advanced scientific data to terms which are sure to fascinate every reader.

Of interest to scientists in all disciplines and at all levels; all laymen interested in the world in which they live.



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